

**Abstract 354**

**TITLE:** HIV Testing in Gay Sex Clubs

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**BACKGROUND/OBJECTIVES:** A recent US survey of gay bathhouses and sex clubs found that while 43% of the bathhouses offered HIV testing, only two (20%) sex clubs offered such services. Nevertheless, the proportion of men who might test in these venues is high. The objective of this study was to evaluate the feasibility of HIV testing in the two gay sex clubs.

**METHODS:** Conducting secondary analyses, we compared risk behaviors of HIV-testers at two sex clubs to similar testers at a standard HIV-test clinic. Subjects were men who tested at either of two sex clubs (n=162) or the clinic (n=2224) from September 1997 through December 1998, reported sex with another male, and identified their sexual orientation as "gay, bisexual or other."

**RESULTS:** The average age of the sex club group was significantly higher than the clinic group (40 vs. 36, respectively, SD=10 for both groups,  $p<.001$ ). There were no significant differences between the two groups on ethnic/racial or sexual identities; the majority was white (73%) and identified their sexual orientation as gay (93%). The average number of previous tests for both groups was 5 (SD=3). Men at the sex club were more likely to report having had more partners in the last 12 months ( $p<.001$ ), having partners that they knew to inject drugs ( $p<.01$ ), and using nitrates ( $p<.001$ ). Men in the clinic group were more likely to report having used alcohol ( $p<.001$ ) and ecstasy, ( $p<.01$ ). 4% of the sex club group tested positive compared to 3% of the clinic group (ns). Men who tested positive at the club had a higher average number of partners in the last 12 months (51, SD=75) than those testing positive at the clinic (14, SD=33) ( $p<.05$ ), and the average ages for the groups were 34 (SD=6) and 36 (SD=9) respectively (ns).

**CONCLUSIONS:** While the average age of the sex club group was significantly higher than the clinic group, the average age of men testing positive was not; thus, the sex club was a useful place to reach younger HIV-positive men. Public health efforts to provide HIV testing services would be a feasible and valued service in these establishments.

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